How to Read the Psalms

(Psalm 46:1-11, December 11, 2022)

The Book of Psalms contains many passages that Christians love. They are often read at weddings, funerals, or in times of joy and sorrow. Many people are drawn to the Psalms because they express deep emotions of faith.

But let us remember: the Psalms are not all "the direct words of God." They are faith-songs written and sung by human beings, often as confessions of faith. Some of them are prayers of those who misunderstood God, or even cried out in anger. We should not treat every word of the Psalms as if it were God's own voice, without discernment.

For example, some psalms were written by "the sons of Korah," and while they express genuine longing for God, they also reveal misunderstandings and immaturities. Yet even those words were included in Scripture because God accepted their worship and allowed their voices to be heard.

When we read carefully, we find that many psalms include prayers for vengeance—requests that enemies would be destroyed. These reflect the worldview of "reward the good and punish the wicked" (what we might call a simplistic moral retribution). Such cries for vengeance are not the same as the teaching of Jesus Christ, who taught us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us.

This means that while the Psalms are a great encouragement, they must be read in the light of the New Testament. If we use them wrongly, we may end up justifying hatred and violence, which runs contrary to the gospel of Christ.

Yes, the Psalms are valuable as records of Israel's faith experiences. They show us how people of old trusted God in their struggles. But they also show us human weakness. For us today, the key is not to imitate their calls for revenge, but to learn from their earnest desire to pour out their hearts before God.

As Gentiles—non-Jews—what we need most is not a theology centered on Israel's law, but the gospel of the Kingdom of God, revealed by Jesus. Paul's letters give us great depth of teaching, but if we make his theology the starting point, we may end up with a faith that feels foreign to our hearts. What we truly need is the gospel of the

Father in heaven—the message of love, mercy, and reconciliation that Jesus himself proclaimed.

Therefore, when reading the Psalms, let us be thankful for the faith they record, but also measure them against the perfect light of Christ's teaching. The Psalms are a testimony of humanity reaching toward God, but Christ is God reaching down to us.